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THE

PRICE OF A SOUL.

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THERE is a buyer in the markets of the world whose name is never in the newspapers, and whose bids are never in the prices-current.— Nevertheless, his business is widely extended, and carried on with ceaseless activity. He chafers in the open street. He walks boldly upon “Change.” He glides into the dimness of the counting-house. He steps into the workshop. He goes out upon the farm. He is most successful at the theatre, the tavern, the race-course, and the ballroom. He is the *buyer of souls*.

He has various prices in his dreadful traffic. He bought one soul for thirty pieces of silver. He has bought some for less. But for a larger price—for heaps of gold, to shine and glisten in men's eyes, or for fame and guilty pleasures, how many have bartered away their immortal spirits?

Here is the history of one exchange of this kind. Some years since, the writer sat in the midst of a large congregation, gathered in a church in one of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania. It was the middle of the week, but

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the Spirit of God was upon the hearts of the people, and they came willingly to the house of God. It was a solemn place. Without the walls of the church there waved an ancient forest, and hard by, the dust of our fathers slept.— Within the Holy Ghost was working in a hundred awakened hearts. The sermon of the morning had for its theme, the value of the soul. The servant of Christ closed his appeal with the following narration.

A few years ago, there was living in one of our large cities, a young lady who was the daughter of wealthy and worldly parents. She was fond of the gay pleasures of the city, and plunged into them with the eagerness of youth. Her gayety, youth, and wealth, were sure passports to the highest circles of fashion, and there she lived and moved and trifled as though there were no other world.

While thus living in pleasure she was invited one evening, by a friend, to accompany her to the weekly prayer meeting in a church of the city. There it pleased God to visit her with the influences of his Spirit. She was convinced of sin, and returned to her home in deep sorrow. Her heaviness of spirit was soon discovered, and her worldly parents were in conster-

nation lest their beautiful daughter should leave the world of fashion for the service of God.— They besought her and commanded her to return to the circles in which she had formerly shone. They surrounded her with gay friends. Yet, she was still stricken in heart, and refused to be comforted. At last they succeeded in bribing her to attend a large party of pleasure, by the gift of the richest dress which could be purchased in the city. She reluctantly consented to their request, went to the festival, and returned without one trace of her religious emotions.

In a few weeks after, that daughter was lying at the point of death. Skillful physicians were around her, but they could only tell her dismayed parents that "there was no hope."— When this opinion was made known to the dying girl, she lay for a few minutes in perfect silence. Then rousing herself, she ordered a servant to bring her *that dress*, and hang it upon the post of her bed. She then sent for her father and mother. In a few moments they stood weeping by her side. She looked upon each of them for a time; then lifting up her hand, and pointing to the dress, said to each of them distinctly, and with the terrible calmness

of despair, "*Father, mother, there is the price of my soul.*" In a few hours she knew the full value of that which she had lost. There are lessons taught by this mournful story, to which we do well if we take heed.

1. It warns us against the terrible sin of *tampering with the soul that is under the influence of the Spirit of God.* Some men do this deliberately, and of purpose. They strive to defeat the merciful purposes of the Holy Ghost. They sneer at the wholesome fears of the sinner, as the imaginary troubles of a coward. Partaking of the malicious craft of the devil their master, they perplex the inquirer with sophisms, and thus fill his mind with doubts; or they lure him back to the world, by cunning temptations to open sin. Like some men of our Saviour's day, they neither go into the kingdom themselves, nor do they suffer those who are entering to go in. Surely when such men are condemned by God, all others must say Amen, and acknowledge that their "damnation is just."

It is to be hoped, however, that the large majority of the men who are educated under the light of the gospel, would not commit this sin intentionally, and of "malice aforethought." Even when careless concerning their own souls.

and willing to barter them away for that which is vanity and a cheat, they would not choose to occupy the place of the parents in the foregoing narrative. They do not covet, they rather shrink from the agony those parents must have felt, when they looked upon their dying child. They do not wish to go to the judgment with the stain of another's blood upon their garments. They would not willingly increase the difficulties of the struggling soul.

Yet are they, in effect, upon the side of the avowed and pious opposers of God's Spirit. If not for Christ, they are against him. If not co-workers with God, they are co-workers with Satan. Their example and their influence can have but one result. They can lead men only in the way they walk themselves, and their pathway leads directly to the pit. Let all such hear this warning, and beware how they set themselves against the Holy Spirit.

2. We are warned against the sin of *grieving the Holy Ghost*. This was the sin of the daughter. Her parents tempted, and she yielded.— They offered and she accepted the seducing gift. It is possible that the father and mother may not have been aware of the greatness of their sin. They may have done it "ignorantly, in

unbelief." But the daughter had a quickened conscience. She was under the influence of the Holy Ghost. She had convictions of sin, and solemn impressions of duty. In doing what she did, she acted in direct opposition to the suggestions of conscience and of God's Spirit. She took the fatal bibe, and went where it was hoped conscience might again be stupefied, and the Spirit banished from her heart.

Can the human soul commit a more daring transgression, after it has been enlightened from on high, than voluntarily to return to the world and sin? Can there be a more presumptuous offence, than deliberately to close the eyes, and plunge into fresh guilt? Next to the gift of his Son, the gift of his Holy Spirit is the best blessing God has to bestow upon guilty man.— Is it not, then, the crowning act of all wickedness, knowingly and wilfully to resist this Spirit? And if men will resist such mercies, who shall say aught against the justice of the punishment, when the despisers "wonder and perish?"

3. Ponder now, solemnly and deeply, a question which is addressed to you in all earnestness and sincerity: *Have you not felt the strivings of God's Spirit, and have you not resisted them?*

Have you never seen a hand which "pointed to the coming wrath?" Have you never heard a voice which "warned you from that wrath to flee?" And did you not forget these solemn warnings? Can you not look back upon a season, still well remembered, and visible yet in the waste of misspent years—a season in which the importance of this world manifestly dwindled, and your soul was brought under the power of the world to come—when truth stood out before you in no equivocal light, and duty lay before you as clearly as if traced by a sunbeam? Has not the law of God distinctly uttered its terrible threatenings? Have not convictions of sin darkened and disturbed all your thoughts? In the silence of the night, or in the glare and business of the day, and even in the haunts of revelry and crime, have you not heard peal after peal from Sinai, which made your soul tremble and fear?

If there has been such a season, what has been its result? What has been the effect of that critical period in your history? Did it leave you penitent and humble at the foot of the cross? Or did it leave you with a harder heart, and a more seared conscience, to await in indif-



ference the judgments of Almighty God? If this is the case, ponder one question more: the Spirit, you have grieved is its author: "If he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, *and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*" What must that punishment be, which is "sorer" than "dying without mercy?" Whatever it may be, it will be the portion of the despiser of God's Holy Spirit.

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